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E.O. 11652: N/A TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: TRADE UNIONS AND THE BARRE PLAN

REF: PARIS 28285

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1. SUMMARY: CGC (CADRES) AND FO RAISE THE TONE OF

THEIR CRITICISM OF THE BARRE PLAN BUT STILL REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 7 OCTOBER DAY OF STRIKES CALLED BY CGT, CFDT AND FEN. HOWEVER, SOME FO UNIONS ARE EXPECTED TO BREAK DISCIPLINE AND CALL INDEPENDENTLY FOR STRIKE ACTIONS, BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO CAUSE ANY PROBLEMS FOR FO NATIONAL LEADERS. THE CADRES (MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL), SHOWING SIGNS OF POLITICAL ALIENATION, ARE THEREFORE PRESENTING GOF WITH SERIOUS CHALLENGE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE HORIZON OF THE LABOR SCENE DARKENED A BIT THE LAST FEW DAYS BECAUSE OF THE TWO DEVELOPMENTS DESCRIBED BELOW.

3. CGC CHANGES TUNE:

- (A) AT A MEETING ON 25 SEPTEMBER THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE MIDDLE AND UPPER LEVEL MANAGERIAL EMPLOYEES UNION (CGC-CADRES) REVOLTED AGAINST ITS PRESIDENT, YVON CHARPENTIER, WHO HAD EXPRESSED A QUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR THE BARRE PLAN. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, THE CGC COMMITTEE ISSUED A STATEMENT PRO-TESTING THE ALLEGED INTENT OF THE BARRE PLAN TO IMPOSE ON THE CADRES MOST OF THE SACRIFICES REQUIRED BY THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION. ACTUALLY, THIS IS AN EXAGGERATED VIEW AND IF ANYTHING CHARPENTIER WAS JUSTIFIED IN FEELING RELIEVED BY THE OUTCOME OF HIS EXCEPTIONAL THREE MEETINGS WITH BARRE AND AN HOUR AND A QUARTER MEETING WITH GISCARD BEFORE THE PUBLICATION OF THE PLAN. THE EXTRA EFFORT THE PLAN HAS ASKED THE CADRES TO MAKE IS INDEED SLIGHT AND SUBSTANTIALLY LESS THAN WOULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED IF GISCARD AND BARRE HAD NOT LEANED OVER BACKWARDS TO ACCOMMODATE THE CADRES.
- (B) AFTER THE FOREGOING MEETING, CHARPENTIER CHANGED HIS TUNE AND IN PRESS AND RADIO DECLARATIONS HAS BEEN CRITICIZING SEVERELY THE BARRE PLAN, PREDICTING ITS FAILURE AND THREATENING A CADRES REVENGE AT THE VOTING BOOTH IF GOF PERSISTS IN UNDERMINING THEIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PURCHASING POWER.

(C) PART OF THE EXPLANATION OF THE CGC NATIONAL COMMITTEE'S ATTITUDE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO INTERNAL UNION POLITICS BECAUSE A SIZABLE MINORITY IN THE CGC HAD FOUGHT BITTERLY AGAINST CHARPENTIER'S ELECTION LAST YEAR AS PRESIDENT AND HAS SINCE THEN ACTED AS A FACTIONAL GROUP WITHIN CGC. HOWEVER, THE BASIC

REASON BEHIND THE REVOLT IS A CERTAIN MALAISE THAT HAS AFFLICTED THE WHITE COLLAR MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL WHO FEEL THREATENED BY THE CURRENT AGITATION AND RHETORIC CONCERNING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN FRANCE. THIS RHETORIC WAS SUSTAINED BY THE RECENT PUBLICATION OF AN OECD STUDY WHICH PROVIDES STATISTICAL EVIDENCE SHOWING THAT SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN FRANCE ARE GREATER THAN IN ANY OTHER OECD MEMBER COUNTRY. THE STUDY FOUND THAT DIFFERENTIALS AND FRINGE BENEFITS BETWEEN CADRES AND NON-CADRE EMPLOYEES IN FRANCE ARE SUBSTANTIAL.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5575

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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(D) ALTHOUGH, AS POINTED OUT ABOVE, THE BARRE PLAN DOES NOT GO AS FAR AS MOST OBSERVERS HAD EXPECTED IN DEMANDING SACRIFICES FROM THE CADRES, THE CGC RANK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND FILE PROBABLY READ THE BARRE PLAN AS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF A GOVERNMENT PLAN TO NARROW THE EXISTING GAP BETWEEN CADRES AND NON-CADRES.

- (E) ANOTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO THE CADRES' PREOCCUPATION WITH THEIR FUTURE IS THE RENEWED AND PERENNIAL DEBATE ABOUT THE SOCIAL SECURITY DEFICIT. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL SECURITY ARE BASED ON A SALARY CEILING. AS A RESULT LOWER PAID CATEGORIES OF WORKERS CONTRIBUTE A SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER PORTION OF THEIR SALARIES THAN DO THE CADRES. ACCORDINGLY, ONE OF THE MORE FREQUENT SUGGESTIONS MADE EVERY TIME THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL SECURITY IS DEBATED IS TO RAISE THE CEILING ON WHICH CONTRIBUTIONS ARE DUE OR EVEN TO REMOVE THE CEILING ALTOGETHER AND MAKE THE ENTIRE SALARY SUBJECT TO SS CONTRIBUTIONS.
- (F) IT IS NO WONDER THEREFORE THAT THE CADRES ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL THAT THE WORLD IS CLOSING IN ON THEM AND THEY HAD BETTER PUT UP A FIGHT BEFORE IRREVERSIBLE ACTIONS ARE TAKEN BY GOF.
- (G) THERE IS, HOWEVER, A POLITIRAL DIMENSION TO THE CADRE REACTION TO THE BARR PLAN. A GROWING NUMBER OF WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS, ARE BEING ATTRACTED BY THE SOCIALIST PARTY. THEY SEE THE PROSPECT OF A SOCIALIST TYPE ECONOMY WITH INCREASED NATIONALIZATIONS AND GREATER CONTROL OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES TO THE CADRES TO EXERCISE MANAGERIAL AUTHORITY ON A SCALE WHICH THEY HAVE NOT HAD UNDER PRIVATE MANAGEMENT. A GROWING NUMBER OF CADRES ARE DISCOVERING THAT A SOCIALIST ECONOMY WILL IN EFFECT BE RUN BY THEM, AND THUS THEIR RELATIVE SOCIAL POSITION, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF POWER, WILL BE ENHANCED

RATHER THAN DIMINISHED.

- 4. FO RAISES ITS TONE:
- (A) THE SECOND DEVELOPMENT CAME FROM FO WHOSE SECRETARY GENERAL, ANDRE BERGERON, HAD COMMENTED ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE BARRE PLAN IN TERMS WHICH APPARENTLY THE FO MILITANTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE NATIONALIZED SECTOR, INTERPRETED AS QUALIFIED SUPPORT. ACTUALLY WHAT BERGERON HAD SAID WAS TO WELCOME THE GOVERNMENT'S REAFFIRMATION OF ITS COMMITMENT TO FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND THE INTRODUCTION OF PRICE CONTROLS AS FO HAD SUGGESTED. BERGERON, HOWEVER, HAD EXPRESSED STRONG DOUBTS ABOUT GOF'S ABILITY TO ENFORCE SUCH CONTROLS.

- (B) AS A RESULT OF THIS REACTION, THE FO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COMPOSED OF SEVENTEEN GENERAL SECRETARIES OF DEPARTMENTAL UNIONS AND EQUAL NUMBER OF VARIOUS FEDERATIONS, PLUS THE TWELVE MEMBERS OF THE CONFEDERAL BUREAU, HEID A LONG MEETING ON 26 SEPT. THE OUTCOME WAS A DECISION TO RAISE THE TONE OF CRITICISM OF THE BARRE PLAN AND TO THREATEN A STRIKE ACTION IF GOF INTERFERED WITH LABOR'S ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE COLLECTIVELY SALARIES AND WORK CONDITIONS. THE FO COMMITTEE, HOWEVER, DECIDED TO REFUSE PARTICIPATION IN THE 7 OCTOBER STRIKE ACTION CALLED BY CGT, CFDT AND FEN BECAUSE "OF THE OBVIOUS POLITICAL INSPIRATION OF THIS ACTION".
- (C) NOTWITHSTANDING THE FOREGOING, FO'S FEDERATION IN THE NATIONALIZED GAS AND ELECTRICAL COMPANIES DECIDED TO CALL AN EIGHT-HOUR STRIKE ON 8 OCTOBER. FO LEADERS ANTICIPATE ALSO THAT, DEPENDING UPON LOCAL CONDITIONS, SOME FO UNIONS MIGHT FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RESIST THE COMBINED CGT-CFDT-FEN PRESSURE AND WILL ENGAGE INDEPENDENTLY IN STRIKE ACTIONS ON 7 OCT. HOWEVER, THEY FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THIS WILL BE ON SUCH A SMALL SCALE AS NOT TO CREATE ANY PARTICULAR PROBLEMS FOR FO'S NATIONAL LEADERS.
- 5. THE FO DEVELOPMENT ABOVE CALLS FOR SEVERAL

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OBSERVATIONS:

(A) EVEN FO WITH ITS COURAGEOUS PRAGMATISM CANNOT GO AGAINST FRENCH TRADE UNION TRADITION WHICH EQUATES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH TREASON ANY EXPRESSIONS OF AGREEMENT WITH A GOVERNMENTAL ACTION. THE RULE IS THAT A LABOR LEADER SHOULD ALWAYS BE ABLE TO FIND SOMETHING WRONG WITH ANY GOVERNMENT ACTION, REGARDLESS OF HOW CLOSE IT MAY COME MEETING UNION DEMANDS. THE ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP WHICH CHARACTERIZES FRENCH TRADE UNIONISM EXISTS NOT ONLY IN RELATION TO PRIVATE EMPLOYEES BUT ALSO WITH THE GOVERNMENT AS AN EMPLOYER OR AS SYMBOL OF PUBLIC AUTHORITY.

- (B) THE NUMBER OF FO MEMBERS WHO ARE JOINING THE SOCIALIST PARTY RANKS IS CONSIDERABLE AND INDIVIDUALLY CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE ATTRACTED BY ACTIONS WHICH BY DEFINITION ARE CONSIDERED AS HELPFUL FOR THE PS FORTUNES.
- (C) THE PUBLIC SECTOR AFFILIATES OF FORCE OUVRIERE HAVE GOOD REASON TO SUSPECT THAT DESPITE BARRE'S ASSURANCES THAT SALARIES WILL KEEP PACE WITH THE COST OF LIVING INDEX. THEIR REAL PURCHASING POWER WILL DROP IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. THIS SUSPICION IS JUSTIFIED BY GOF STATEMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE 1977 AGREEMENTS WILL TAKE PLACE "AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME." THE PRIME MINISTER'S LABOR ADVISER TOLD LABATT THAT "APPROPRIATE TIME" CAN VERY WELL MEAN JUNE 1977 INSTEAD OF JANUARY WHEN NORMALLY CONTRACTS COME UP FOR RENEWAL OR RENEGOTIATION. FO LEADERS PROBABLY HAVE HEARD OR GUESSED THIS TACTIC ON THE PART OF GOF AND REALIZED THAT WHAT WAS IN-VOLVED WAS AT LEAST A SIX-MONTH LAG BEHIND THE COST OF LIVING INDEX IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF 1977.
- (D) FO LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS ARE GENUINELY DISTRUSTFUL OF GOF'S ABILITY TO CONTROL PRICES AND UNLESS THEY ARE GIVEN REASON TO THINK OTHERWISE THEY WILL CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT THE BARRE PLAN IS INSIDIOUSLY IMPLEMENTING AN INCOMES POLICY WHICH IS MORE OF AN ANATHEMA TO FO THAN TO ALL OTHER UNIONS, INCLUDING CGT.
- (E) FO LEADERS WERE SINCERELY DISAPPOINTED THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BARRE PLAN DID NOT INCLUDE ANY ATTEMPTS OR PROMISES OF "STRUCTURAL REFORMS" WHICH, IN ADDITION TO BEING INDISPENSABLE, IN THEIR VIEW, FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE PLAN, WOULD HAVE ENABLED FO TO EXTEND TO IT A MORE EXPLICIT SUPPORT.

6. COMMENT: SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE JUMPED TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE FOREGOING EVENTS CONCERNING FO AND CGC HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT A UNITY OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN THEIR REJECTION, IF NOT RESISTANCE, TO THE BARRE PLAN. WE BELIEVE THIS TO BE A HASTY CONCLUSION. FO'S ANTI-COMMUNISM IS SUFFICIENTLY VISCERAL AND IDEOLOGICALLY AGGRESSIVE AS TO PROTECT IT FROM PLAYING THE CGT GAME.

7. THE CADRES, HOWEVER, REPRESENT A MUCH MORE

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DIFFICULT PROBLEM AND CHALLENGE FOR GOF. IT IS KNOWN THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD HIMSELF IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT SIGNS OF POLITICAL ALIENATION AMONG THE CADRES AND IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR MODERATING BARRE'S INTENTIONS TO HIT THE CADRES HARDER. HOWEVER, PUBLIC OPINION HAS BEEN SENSITIZED TO THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND IS INCREASINGLY TURNING HOSTILE TOWARDS THE CADRES AND GENERALLY THE MANAGERIAL CLASS. PRESS AND RADIO-TV HAVE CALLED THE CADRES' RESISTANCE TO THE PLAN UNREASONABLE, AND MOST LIKELY THIS CRITICAL ATTITUDE WILL BECOME HARDER IN THE WEEKS AHEAD, ESPECIALLY IF THE CADRES DECIDE TO DO SOMETHING MORE THAN MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS. ACCORDINGLY, IF GOF FROM GISCARD DOWN WERE TO PERSIST IN THEIR PRESENT TACTIC OF CUDDLING THE CADRES, THE EFFECT ON THE REST OF THE POPULATION WILL BE STRONGLY NEGATIVE.

8. THE CGT-PCF, ON THE OTHER HAND, IN ANOTHER DISPLAY OF THEIR ENORMOUS CAPACITY FOR OPPORTUNISM AND HYPOCRISY ARE SEEKING TO EXPLOIT THE CADRES' PRE-OCCUPATIONS BY SIDING WITH THEM, BY DESCRIBING THEM AS VICTIMS OF THE SAME SYSTEM THAT IS EXPLOITING THE WORKING CLASS, AND CALLING UPON THEM TO JOIN IN A UNITED REJECTION OF THE BARRE PLAN. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, IT IS THIS CGT-PCF ATTENTION TO THE CADRES IN THE LAST 4-5 YEARS THAT IS CAUSING CONCERN IN GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES AS THEY SEEK TO RECONCILE DEMANDS FOR GREATER EQUALITY AMONG THE SALARIED WORK FORCE AND THE DANGERS IMPLICIT IN A POLITICAL ALIENATION OF THE CADRES.

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